

October 9 2020

Noticias y Notas

News and notes from the Second Judicial District Court

Customer-friendly paralegal wins 3rd quarter PAL

DeAnne Romero, a paralegal in the Center for Self-Help and Dispute Resolution, is one of those people who steps up in a crisis.

When COVID-19 forced the Center for Self-Help to start serving the public primarily by phone or email, DeAnne volunteered to be the sole person taking phone calls. And her performance in that role earned her the Second Judicial District Performance Awarded Leave (PAL) Award for the third quarter of 2020.



Self-Help Center Paralegal DeAnne Romero is the PAL winner for the 3rd Quarter of 2020.

"We knew we would start to receive more phone calls since we were temporarily suspending in-person interviews," said Aja Brooks, Director of the Self-Help Center. "However, we did not expect the hundreds of calls we began to receive."

DeAnne took it all in stride, Aja said, providing information to customers over the phone and taking the extra step of emailing forms and other information when necessary.

"Because I receive a copy of all emails sent to our division, I noticed a lot of customers were pleased with DeAnne's assistance," Aja added. "They praised her ability to explain the process and provide the exact information or forms they needed."

In addition to providing outstanding customer service, Aja said, DeAnne also offered feedback that helped the division take additional steps to improve customer service, such as adding two additional phone lines.

"DeAnne has impressed me since I started as the Center's director in 2019," Aja said. "She has always provided top-notch service as a paralegal, but I have really seen her shine during the pandemic. She has remained cheerful and patient with our customers, and she has done all this while caring for two young boys and teleworking. We are lucky to have her as part of the Self-Help Center's team."

Congrats to a new paramedic

We could not pass on the chance to acknowledge Eric Flores for recently graduating from the UNM School of Medicine Emergency Medical Services Academy. He is now an official paramedic. Eric is the son of Pat Flores, Bailiff to Chief Judge Stan Whitaker, and Stephanie Galindre-Flores. Before starting his paramedic training, Eric worked at SJDC for two years as a Bailiff for Judge Christina Argyles.



Shout outs



This the space where we sound the horn for outstanding performances.

This week's shout out goes to **Gena Lopez in the Civil Division** for the way she assisted a customer seeking to apply for a name change. The customer said Gena offered "impeccable service. She let me know about a legal clinic for further questions, which I didn't expect, and she just listened and communicated well with me. I really appreciated it and it really gave me a better idea of what to expect when it comes to filing with your court." **Gena, we thank you as well.** Service like that makes us all look good.

We need more news and notes. Share your stories by contacting us at: albdxh@nmcourt.gov

Guardians of the record are always on duty

When the Second Judicial District Court first implemented COVID-19 safety protocols, most court divisions quickly adopted work schedules that allowed staff members to telework at least part of the time. But one division—the Court Reporters and Monitors—could not immediately make that shift.

Court reporters and monitors play an essential role in the court system. “Although court reporters and monitors sit silently in the courtroom they serve an essential role in capturing the record of the proceedings,” said Diona Gibson, supervisor of the Court Reporters and Monitors Division.

What they are doing is making a record of everything said in every hearing—from the judge announcing the opposing parties to the reading of the verdict in a jury trial. As guardians of the record, court reporters and monitors also make sure the record is archived so it can be retrieved, if necessary, for any appeals after a case is concluded.

“As long as hearings are being conducted, we have to be there to take the record,” Diona said. “That means we could not immediately shift to teleworking, and even now our monitors still are the only people, other than the judges and bailiffs, who are in the courtroom every day.”

Court reporters, because they use their own stenograph machines, have been able to telework, taking the record while attending hearings remotely via either Google Meet or teleconference. Monitors take the record using a program called “For The Record” software, which is on the court’s network and linked to courtroom computers, making it difficult for them to work from home.

Rotating schedules

Even the court reporters who have been working from home are doing so on a rotating schedule, because there are certain hearings, such as criminal hearings with out-of-custody defendants, that require the person taking the record to be in the courtroom.

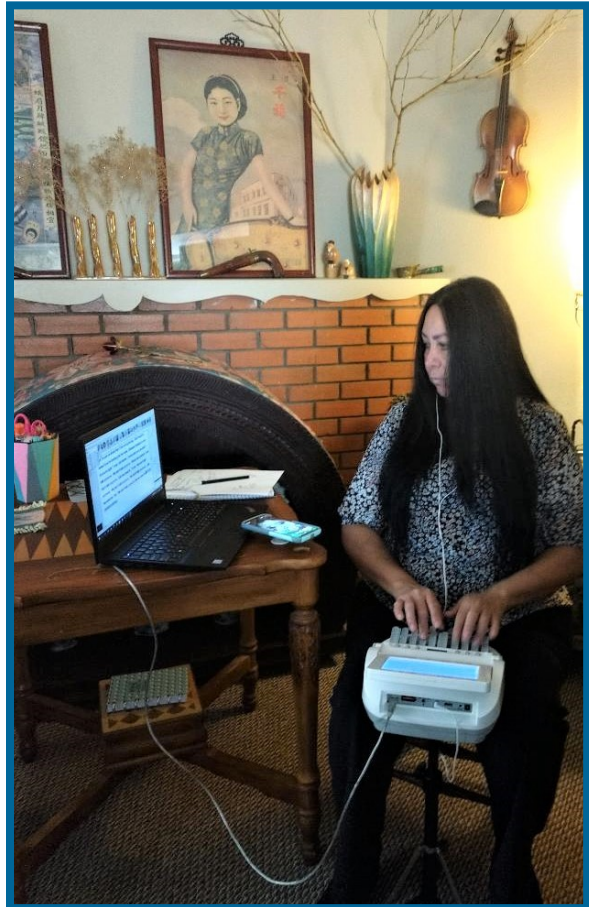
The biggest challenge for the division has been training newly hired monitors, said Anthony Lukesh, the Court Monitor Leadworker.

“Typically, a new hire would sit next to an experienced monitor in the courtroom to see exactly how they take the record,” he explained. “When the social distancing protocol went into effect, we could no longer do training that way.”

Working with the IT department, the division devised a way for new hires to stay in their offices and still observe a more experienced colleague taking the record.

“It is basically like screen sharing (on the part of the monitor is in the courtroom),” Anthony said. “The new hire can view the hearing from their office and still see exactly what the monitor in the courtroom is typing. There was a bit of a learning curve with this, but we have the process down pretty well now.”

Both Diona and Anthony offered praise for all of the reporters and monitors for adapting so well to all the changes that the pandemic has forced on them. “They have been amazing at adapting to new work schedules as well as to the new technology and different types of hearings—from Google Meet to teleconference,” Diona said. “They deserve credit for taking it all in stride, and being there to make sure there is always a complete and accurate record.”



Court Reporter Veronica Byrd takes a hearing record from her home office. This is one of the ways court reporters and monitors have adapted to perform their jobs during the pandemic.